



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

RIYADH • SAUDI ARABIA



**National Day Remarks by U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom Joseph Westphal
February 14, 2016**

Thank you and welcome to all of you. Those of you who are in traditional American garb, the blue jean, I want to congratulate you. You know, the inventor of the blue jean was Levi Strauss, and he was an immigrant to America. And so, we thank you for wearing our national dress.

I want to especially thank His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. He is such a great friend of the United States. He is a friend of mine. I've enjoyed so much getting to know him in the two years I've been here as Ambassador. He's a highly educated man. He graduated from King Saud University, and he's got lots of experience in governing. He's worked at the Ministry of Defense for a long time, and of course he was Deputy Governor of Asir, the Governor of al-Qassim, and now the Governor of Riyadh. So, he is our governor, and let's give him a big hand and thank him for all he does for us. And don't blame the metro on him. [laughter]

So here you are, in America's State Fair. We decided this year that we would celebrate our heritage and our diversity by doing something that is so typical of America, that so reflects our heritage and our diversity, which is the State Fair.

You know, we began as a nation in the 1800's really as an agricultural nation, an agricultural economy. And in the 1800's some of the first state fairs began to appear, in New York and other places. They were basically created to strengthen the competition of our agricultural economy, to train farmers, to help farmers to develop their agriculture, but also to showcase the diversity of the state, and to bring to focus all the things that made that particular state, whether it was New York, California, a unique place to live, and to raise a family, and so on. Now, Your Royal Highness, we wanted to really mimic a typical state fair, which meant we would have had a big roller coaster, a ferris wheel, we would have had all kinds of animals, cattle, goats, sheep, and fireworks. But I didn't want to get arrested [laughter] so I decided not to do that.

But what you see here are the common denominators of almost every state fair. Beginning with the food that's unique to most state fairs. It's very good food, but it's not good for you necessarily. It's great food, and you will see it here, displayed everywhere.

You will also see the competition that we all in America love to engage in, the booths represent a little bit of that competition, we compete against ourselves, we compete against each other, we win prizes, we give them to our girlfriends, our wives, our daughters. So that's part of the nature.

The music -- the gentlemen you saw singing here tonight -- fantastic group, you will hear them later tonight. They represent the music, the folk music of our country, the bluegrass music. And all of our music emanated from that, it emanated from that music, those acoustical instruments, whether



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it's jazz, whether it's blues, rock, all of it. And we are delighted to be able to entertain you with this fantastic music tonight.

And I also wanted to tell you that state fairs are really about people engaging with other people in the state. It's about connecting with your friends, connecting with your families, connecting with your identity as a person in a state, and tonight I want to thank all our Saudi friends who are here, because this is a way that we connect with you as well. We share our culture, we share our diversity, we show you what we're about, and we learn from you.

So I want to task every American that's in this place today, to be an ambassador for the United States. And I know that all of you come from a particular state, maybe some of you have been to a state fair in your state, or in other states, so your job tonight is to acquaint all of the folks that are here who have maybe never visited a state fair and tell them what they're all about, and how people connect to people.

Our two countries connect essentially through commerce and through people as well. And this is a great way to do it.

As you leave tonight, if you haven't done so already, I also want to call attention to our art exhibit that we have in the front. I know that you probably all rushed in here, and didn't get a chance to see it. While you're here tonight you should go and look at it. It's a fantastic exhibition. We've had now four Saudi art exhibitions here at Quincy, and this one is a very special one, and we want to make sure all of you get a chance to see it, and maybe come back and see it. It's a calligraphy exhibition, by the way. I want to especially thank my wife Linda, who has been the inspiration and the force behind having it. The first thing she said to me was "I want us to have an art exhibit and I want to display Saudi art, and really kind of invest in the young people of Saudi Arabia, of which there are so many great artists," so she has been very successful at that, and I want to thank her for it.

So thank you for coming tonight, thank you for celebrating our heritage as a people. We are not really celebrating our birthday today, our birthday is coming up in July, July Fourth. July Fourth will be our 240th anniversary. I know that some of you come from countries that say "Well, you're kids, you're children." Well, that's true. We are a young country. And we're in a much younger country still.

But on July Fourth, 240 years ago, our founding fathers declared their independence from Great Britain. And in doing so, they issued a declaration of principles, and in that declaration they said the following: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

So tonight, we want to wish all of you a long life, a blessed liberty and that you have all the opportunity and that your children have all the opportunity to achieve happiness in this world.

Thank you for coming, thank you for being here today. Your Royal Highness, it is an honor to have you here. Thank you very much.